

Most people with asthma get a tight feeling in the chest, shortness of breath, coughing or wheezing at some point in their life. Asthma must be controlled well or can harm you, but can be controlled to reduce symptoms so people living with asthma can be active and healthy. Working together with a healthcare provider is key to managing asthma well. Together, you can find out what causes asthma getting worse. These causes are called "asthma triggers." You will learn the steps to take when you have symptoms, and learn when to see the doctor or seek immediate help.

Symptoms

Common asthma symptoms when your asthma is not well-controlled include a tight feeling in the chest, shortness of breath, coughing and wheezing. It's important to know these signs and talk to your doctor so you can breathe better and be active and healthy.

Risk Factors

If someone in your family has asthma, you have a greater chance of having it. Breathing certain elements in the air may put people at the greatest risk of getting asthma for the first time. If your parents smoked and you breathed the smoke this may have been a factor, but many people get asthma from pollen, dust, and many other factors.

How to Tell if You Have Asthma

Asthma is a disease that requires a diagnosis by a healthcare professional and ongoing checkups the rest of your life. At the first visit, your asthma care provider will figure out how severe your asthma is and create a treatment plan. He or she will get your medical history, which should include family members with asthma, allergies, smoking and whether you breathed secondhand smoke, and any pollutants in your workplace. You will probably get a test called spirometry, which tells how much air you can blow out and how fast you can do it. This helps your provider see how well your lungs are working.

If your provider thinks you have something else besides asthma, they will order other tests.

Treatment for Asthma

Each person's asthma is different. You and your provider will work together to put together the best plan for you.

After you find out you have asthma you will be started on medicine that helps control asthma. By taking the right medicine at the right time, you can:

- Breathe better
- Do more of the things you want to do
- Have fewer asthma symptoms

Many good treatments for asthma are available today. Some asthma medicines relax your airways and help you breathe easier, while others make your airways less inflamed or swollen. Be sure to follow your provider's advice about your treatment. Some medicines help prevent asthma symptoms. You need to take these medicines all the time, even when you feel well. Other medicines may be needed if your asthma symptoms get worse. Be sure to start treatment as soon as your symptoms begin.

Managing Your Asthma

Once you are told you have asthma and you understand what it means, it's time to find out what you can do to manage it. Here are some steps you can take:

- **Take Control**
There are many sources available to help you ask the right questions about your asthma. Talk to others in your family who have asthma.
- **Have a Plan**
Learn how to have a plan with your healthcare provider that includes the most important facts to keep your asthma in control.
- **Stay in Control**
Keep track of any cough, tight feeling in your chest, wheezing, problems breathing with being active, or feeling tired. Keeping track of your things will help you stay in control.
- **Know your Medicine**
There are many medicines used to treat asthma. Each person's asthma is different and your doctor will work with you to set up a plan just for you.
- **Reduce Asthma Triggers**
Know your asthma triggers and learn simple ways to limit your contact with them or avoid them.